the ACTION reporter

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PROBE NEED FOR UNIFORM RESIDENTIAL BUILDING CODE

Some 20 national public service groups involved in urban renewal sent delegates to exchange views on the need for and problems of uniform residential building code provisions at a September 3rd meeting sponsored by ACTION.

On September 9, a meeting was called by the American Standards Association (ASA), which has been asked by a number of national groups, including ACTION, to consider whether there is a consensus on the need for uniform residential building code provisions.

The need for action was underscored at a Round Table sponsored in June by **House & Home** Magazine attended by 68 code experts, building officials, construction experts, architects, builders, prefabricators, mortgage lenders, realtors and manufacturers' association leaders. At that time it was pointed out that today's hundreds of conflicting local building codes are costing home buyers an average of at least $1,000 a house. A six-point program to speed reform was adopted.

ACTION's research staff and several independent researchers are currently finishing a two-and-a-half year study of the "Impediments to the Provision of Adequate Housing." The problem of inadequate and conflicting codes is included in one of the studies.

(Left) . . . "The first order of business in the next Congress should be action to remedy the lack of housing legislation." . . . Albert M. Cole, U.S. Housing Administrator.

(Right) . . . "In the final analysis, the important thing for the businessman to remember is that there's fundamentally no difference between the value of keeping a business efficient and productive and maintaining a city that way." . . . Thomas F. Patton, president of the Republic Steel Corporation.

Film Awards Given At Clinic

Prints of the "Man of ACTION" film were awarded as prizes to cities represented by the largest delegations. Winners were: Birmingham, Huntsville and Mobile, Ala. (a three-way tie); Savannah, Ga.; Greenville, Miss.; Raleigh, N.C.; Charleston, S.C.; Nashville, Tenn.; Louisville, Ky.; Arlington, Va., and Clarksburg, West Va. Clarksburg, which had received a "Man of ACTION" print from the Continental Can Company in April, presented its prize print to St. Petersburg, Fla.

SOUTHEASTERN CLINIC DRAWS FROM 71 CITIES IN 19 STATES

Delegates from 71 cities in 19 states attended the ACTION Southeastern Urban Renewal Clinic, September 22nd and 23rd in Atlanta, Georgia. This brought to well over 450 the number of cities across the nation which have taken part in ACTION regional clinics since 1956.

Some 400 persons attended this seventh ACTION regional clinic which was sponsored by a group of prominent Atlanta businessmen. Following the successful pattern established in past clinics, informal workshop sessions—ten in number—were a feature of the Southeastern meeting. A cadre of national experts was on hand to give specific advice.

The Stake of Businessmen

Thomas F. Patton, president, Republic Steel Corporation and a member of ACTION's board of directors, delivered the principal address at a banquet session. He described the fight against municipal blight as one in which the stakes for businessmen are high.

Mr. Patton cautioned businessmen involved in renewal not to expect "too much too soon," and called for patience and persistence in an over-all area-wide plan instead of scattered and sporadic attempts at municipal betterment.

(Continued on page 3)

ATLANTA SPEAKERS' TABLE. . . . Shown at one session of the Southeastern Urban Renewal Clinic in Atlanta are, left to right: Walter Keyes, regional administrator, Housing and Home Finance Agency, Region 3, Atlanta; Cecil Alexander, chairman, Citizens Advisory Committee on Urban Renewal, Atlanta; Charles H. Jagels, Davison Paxon Company, Atlanta; Richard L. Steiner, Commissioner, Urban Renewal Administration, Washington; Guy T. O. Hollyday, vice-chairman, ACTION board of directors, education program committee; Albert M. Cole, Administrator, HHFA, Washington; Fred J. Turner, chairman of the Atlanta Sponsoring Committee; William B. Hartsfield, Mayor of Atlanta; Clifford F. Favrot, member of ACTION's board of directors, New Orleans; Hamilton Douglas, chairman, Atlanta Aldermanic Urban Renewal Committee; C. F. Palmer, ACTION, board of directors, Atlanta; E. Bruce Wedge, regional director for urban renewal operations, Region 3, Atlanta.

Reading for renewal

Can civic beauty be legislated?

A provocative report, **"Planning and Community Appearance,"** outlines an ingenious proposal for encouraging community beauty without impeding design flexibility.

In essence, the 11 leading architects and city planners who produced the report endorse some form of legislation-for-beauty. They propose a new type of municipal ordinance that would help towns and cities improve their visual appearance via a "community design plan." The plan would regulate the appearance of all buildings and properties seen from public streets or pedestrian ways.

The community design plan idea was proposed by the Joint Committee on Design Control of the New York Chapters of the American Institute of Architects and the American Institute of Planners. The report is based on a four-year study of governmental attempts in this country and abroad to prevent urban ugliness and monotony. Most existing attempts at appearance controls, the report states, are aimed at preventing the worst excesses only.

The design plan would be made by civic designers working with architects, landscape architects and land use planners who would outline the esthetic qualities to be achieved or maintained in each area of the municipality.

(Available for $3.50 per copy from the Regional Plan Association, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17.)

Flanner House Homes, Inc., with headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana, won for that city a top achievement award in LOOK Magazine's 1956 community home achievement contest. What distinguished Indianapolis' program was the fact that most of the buyers earned their mortgage down payment by working on their own houses. This unusual method (dubbed a "sweat equity") worked so well that about 150 attractive homes (appraised at $12,000 to $14,000) now occupy land once covered by shacks.

A 75-page booklet titled **"Self-Help Housing"** tells the full story.

(Available for $1.50 per copy from the Board for Fundamental Education, 146 East Washington Street, Indianapolis 4, Indiana. Address requests to John E. Baker, director of program. ACTION offers a report, "Quaker Self-Help Rehabilitation," which tells of the Friends' experiment in cooperative housing rehabilitation in the East Poplar neighborhood, Philadelphia. This report is 25¢ per single copy.)

A report which calls relocation the "unresolved problem" in the elimination of blight and decay is available from the Community Service Society of New York. Titled **"Not Without Hope,"** it contains recommendations on family relocation made by the society's Committee on Housing.

Among the recommendations: earlier notification of families affected, maintaining higher standards in all occupied site buildings and broader responsibility for relocation of site tenants from public housing sites by the Housing Authority.

The society has been operating for more than half a century in New York City, taking part in community efforts to solve the problem of relocation.

(Available for 75¢ per single copy from the Community Service Society, 105 East 22nd Street, New York 10.)

When women buy or build their homes they want to know these things about the site: What zoning laws protect it? Are neighbors congenial? Is it private? Is it close to public transportation?

One hundred housewives spoke up on homes—from buying them to cleaning them—at McCall Magazine's first annual **Congress on Better Living** and a summary of their findings (along with verbatim impromptu remarks) is now in booklet form.

(Supply limited. Available from Jack Bolster, promotion manager, Better Living Department, McCall's Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17. Single copies free.)

James W. Follin, one-time U.S. Urban Renewal Commissioner, sees unlimited opportunities opening up for private enterprise in the long-range urban renewal field in a booklet now available. Titled **"The Role and Interest of Private Enterprise in Urban Renewal,"** it is taken from the proceedings of the Ontario Urban Renewal Conference. In it, he traces the urban renewal program in the United States.

(Available free from either the Ontario Division, Community Planning Association of Canada, 32 Isabella Street, Toronto, Ontario, or from DeLeuw, Cather & Company of Canada Limited, 52 St. Clair Avenue East, Toronto, Canada.)

"Time for ACTION," ACTION's basic booklet which has already been distributed to 100,000 persons throughout the nation, has been reprinted as a public-service contribution by the R. R. Donnelley Company and Hammermil Paper Company.

Residents Kept Informed As Renewal Gets Going

Nashville, Tennessee—A century ago in this area, "Edgefield" meant a small, modest city across the Cumberland river from downtown Nashville. Today, a part of the city, it means the site of the second largest urban renewal project in the nation from the standpoint of acreage and first judged by the number of structures involved.

Backstopping the formal program to implement renewal is the city's intensive—and effective—information program for citizens.

A Division of Urban Renewal has been created in the Department of Public Works by a City Council ordinance. Semi-monthly meetings are held, with representatives from interested city offices gathering with bankers, builders, Chamber of Commerce and real estate representatives.

Meetings of citizens have been held in some 100 homes in the renewal area itself. The assistant coordinator of the Urban Renewal Division (a life-long resident of the renewal area) presides at these informal meetings.

Still more meetings are held in churches, schools and public buildings. ACTION's film, "Man of ACTION," has been shown at many of these meetings. Talks are given by the mayor and officials of the Housing Authority and Planning Commission. One very positive result: neighborhood renewal organizations are being formed.

A color film produced by the Division of Urban Renewal is another aspect of the Nashville story. Through dramatic close-ups of the environment of adults and children in the slum area, it brings home the price that blight exacts in terms of human potential.

For more information, write to Lee Sanders, Coordinator, Division of Urban Renewal, 208 City Office Building, Nashville, Tennessee.

Oakland Brochures Tell How Neighborhood Is Saved

Oakland, California—This city's Clinton Park story—the story of how a basically good neighborhood is being salvaged and made better—is well told in simple and effective brochures.

A small green one (which can be read in one minute) gives a thumbnail sketch of the job played by the non-profit Oakland Renewal Foundation. The Department of Urban Renewal, City Hall, 14th and Washington Streets, distributes a brochure which gives the renewal area's background and potential in four pages, including a map.